Premier of Queensland

BILL INTRODUCED TO IMPROVE QLD'S ORAL HEALTH

The fluoridation of water supplies would become one of the most important and effective public health measures ever introduced in Queensland, Premier Anna Bligh told Parliament today.

The Premier's comments preceded today's introduction of the Government's *Water Fluoridation Bill 2008* by Health Minister Stephen Robertson.

"When I became Premier last year I made a commitment to Queenslanders that I would work to better prepare us for the future and that I would be a Premier for **all** of the State.

"This means taking issues out of the too-hard basket and making tough decisions that will benefit not only all of us, but the future generations of Queenslanders.

"My Government is making those tough decisions and has committed $35 million to fluoridate Queensland's water supplies over the next four years," she said.

Ms Bligh said fluoridation would become one of the State's most important investments in the future health of our children.

"Fluoridation will reverse a trend that has resulted in Queensland kids having the worst teeth in the country and it will deliver dental health benefits to our future generations that other Australians have been enjoying for up to 40 years," she said.

Ms Bligh tabled in Parliament a petition from the Australian Dental Association of Queensland signed by more than 25,000 Queenslanders supporting water fluoridation.

The Premier also addressed a small anti-fluoride protest that gathered outside Parliament House and would meet with representatives later today.

"The Government has not taken the decision to fluoridate drinking water lightly," she said.

"The decision is backed by an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence and long-term use around the world.

"Fluoridation is endorsed by the World Health Organisation, the American Medical Association, Centers for Disease Control and the British Medical Association.

"It is also supported by a number of Australia's peak health bodies, including the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Dental Association, the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Public Health Association of Australia.

"Fluoridation is a safe, effective and proven preventative against tooth decay and I am committed to ensuring that future generations of Queenslanders will reap the benefits," she said.

Executive Building
100 George Street Brisbane
PO Box 15185 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia

Telephone +61 7 3224 4500
Facsimile +61 7 3221 3631
Email ThePremier@premiers.qld.gov.au
Website www.thepremier.qld.gov.au

Mr Robertson said the new Bill would replace the current *Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Act 1963*.

“Under this legislation, a statutory duty will be placed on public water suppliers who supply water to over 1,000 people, to add fluoride to the public water supply under their control or management,” he said.

“Within two years, 80% of Queenslanders will have access to fluoridated water, increasing to more than 90% by 2012.

“A project of this size and scope will require close consultation and collaboration with a number of key stakeholders and across Government.

“Queensland Health and the Department of Local Government have met with the Local Government Association Queensland in the first of regular meetings to discuss the practicalities of fluoridating.

“The planned roll-out will begin with an audit of all water treatment facilities soon to clarify infrastructure requirements and bulk purchasing of plant equipment.

“A high-level group involving several agencies and chaired by Queensland Health also started meeting last month to establish clear roles and responsibilities across Government to implement the fluoridation program.”

Water fluoridation will be phased into water treatment plants in the following local government areas (incorporating the new boundaries):

2008: SEQ major water treatment plants - Mt Crosby (2 plants), Landers Shute, Molendinar, Mudgeeraba and North Pine (54% estimated State coverage)

2009: SEQ minor water treatment plants, Indigenous communities, commencement of Cairns, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton and Toowoomba Regional. (80% estimated coverage)

2010: Completion of Cairns, Gladstone, Mackay and Rockhampton; Fraser, Gympie, Somerset, South Burnett, Southern Downs, commencement of Dalby (83% estimated coverage)

2011: Blackall, Emerald, Dalby completion, Goondiwindi, Hinchinbrook, Longreach, Mornington, Mt Isa, Murweh, North Burnett, Rio Tinto (Weipa), Tablelands, Whitsunday (92% coverage)

2012: Balonne, Banana, Barcaldine, Bundaberg, Burdekin, Carpentaria, Charters Towers, Cassowary, Cloncurry, Flinders, Isaac, Roma, Toowoomba Regional completion (95% coverage).

12 February, 2008

MEDIA: 3224 4500 (Premier’s office) or 3234 1185 (Minister Robertson’s office)